

C O N F I D E N T I A L KUWAIT 001449

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SUBJECT: ASSEMBLY SPEAKER, PROMINENT MP DOWNPLAY

DISSOLUTION RUMORS

REF: KUWAIT 1406

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary and Comment: Responding to a week of press speculation that Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah would seek the dissolution of the National Assembly in response to repeated ministerial grillings, National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi told local dailies April 9 that his talks with the Prime Minister indicated the PM would attempt to resolve differences "with wisdom and caution." During their meeting the same day, prominent MP and Chairman of the International Relations Committee Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager told the Ambassador the PM would avoid the dissolution of the assembly for fear that the process of forming a new government could expose Al-Sabah family rifts. With the Amir and Crown Prince increasingly incapacitated, internal family divisions do appear to be growing. If he is to protect the reputation of the ruling family, Shaykh Sabah must ensure his every action is calculated to balance a large array of competing interests. End Summary and Comment.

¶2. (U) Speaking to local dailies April 9 upon his return to Kuwait from travel abroad, National Assembly Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi said he had "not seen or heard from thePrime Minister of any intention towards dissolving the assembly." The Speaker, who had met with the PM and Deputy PM as well as Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, Mohammed Dhaifullah Sharar the same day, said it was likely that the disputes between the government and some MPs could be solved "through discussion and dialogue, in accordance with constitutional and democratic procedures."

¶3. (C) During an April 9 meeting with the Ambassador and the Senior Advisor and Coordinator for Iraq Policy, Ambassador Richard Jones (septel), MP Mohammed Jassem Al-Sager said it was doubtful that the PM would seek to dissolve the Assembly.

Responding to a question from Ambassador LeBaron, Al-Sager said there was "no truth to what the newspapers are saying (about dissolution)." He said PM Shaykh Sabah would not ask to dissolve the body because he does not want to expose rifts inside the Al-Sabah family by attempting to form a new government. Furthermore, the election of a new National Assembly would provide "no guarantees" that current speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi would be re-elected to his position or that government-leaning and Progressive MPs would have a majority. (Comment: Al-Sager clearly views the reelection of Al-Khorafi and a government-leaning majority with mixed emotions. While he recognizes they are both positive for the advancement of progressive policies, he is also wary of an excessively pro-government National Assembly. He sarcastically noted that the current National Assembly, which he referred to as the "weakest ever," had failed to "impeach" even one Minister, despite repeated attempts. End Comment.)

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